

Headteacher Blog - Week Beginning 19 October 2026

Well, we have made it to half-term! And, judging by this week's diary, we certainly haven't been winding down gently towards the holiday. From launching our new Pupil Parliament and holding our very own elections, to Harvest celebrations, fundraising, planting, sport, music and a wonderful collection of opportunities for parents to come into school, it has been another incredibly busy four days at Woodlands.

Tomorrow is an INSET day for us, so, while our children begin their well-earned break, there will still be work taking place behind the scenes, including essential maintenance around school.

BUT before we head into half-term, there is plenty to celebrate and reflect upon.

Pupil Parliament - Democracy in Action!

One of the highlights of this week has undoubtedly been the launch of our Woodlands Pupil Parliament.

On Monday, Ms Woodland introduced the initiative to our children, explaining what it means to represent others, why having a voice matters and how our new Class MPs will help ensure that children's views contribute meaningfully to school life. I am absolutely delighted that we have had a successful launch and look forward to meaningful engagement, as we have each year, with our elected class representatives.

We spend a great deal of time teaching children about democracy, rights, responsibilities and citizenship, but there is something particularly powerful about allowing them to experience these things for themselves. Following Monday's launch, children who wished to stand for election were encouraged to put themselves forward as prospective Class MPs. On Wednesday, they had the opportunity to prepare and practise short speeches explaining why they would make good representatives. For some children, standing in front of their classmates and asking for their support is a considerable act of courage in itself. Whether or not they were ultimately elected, I hope they feel enormously proud of having taken part.

Today was Election Day!

Classrooms became miniature polling stations, complete with ballot boxes, and children were encouraged to cast their votes thoughtfully, fairly and privately. What a wonderful way to learn that democracy is about much more than simply putting your hand up or getting your own way. It involves listening, considering different viewpoints, making informed choices and respecting the outcome - even when it isn't the one you personally wanted. Our Year 6 children helped collect the ballot boxes so that the votes could be counted.

Our newly elected Class MPs will be announced in a special assembly during the first week back after half-term, when they will receive their badges and begin their new responsibilities. I am very much looking forward to seeing our Pupil Parliament develop. I want our children to understand that their voices matter, that they can contribute positively to their community and that leadership is fundamentally about representing and serving others, rather than wielding power. Of course, congratulations to everyone who had the confidence to stand for election. That willingness to participate is something worth celebrating in its own right.

A Lovely Week for Our Families

This week has also provided some wonderful opportunities for families to spend time in school. On Monday, parents and carers joined our youngest children in Owls, Badgers and Robins for Stay and Play, while families in Acorns and Ladybirds also enjoyed their Spooky Stay and Play sessions. Wednesday then brought more opportunities for families in Foxes, Butterflies and Bumblebees to join in the fun.

These occasions are much more important than they might first appear. For our youngest children, seeing their families welcomed into the places where they learn and play helps strengthen that important connection between home and school. For parents, they provide a valuable opportunity to see the environments, relationships and experiences that form part of their children's everyday lives.

There has also been plenty of opportunity for parents to engage with their children's learning and development through our online parents' evenings, which took place on Monday and Tuesday. Thank you to everyone who made

time to attend. These conversations are an important part of the partnership between home and school, and I hope families found them useful.

Our Reception team also held Read Write Inc. Phonics information sessions for parents on Tuesday, helping families understand how we teach early reading and phonics and how they can support their children at home. Learning to read is one of the most important things children will do during their primary education, and the support children receive from home makes an enormous difference.

Harvest, Community and Thinking of Others

Today, our Year 1 children welcomed families to their Harvest Festival assembly. I am sure many of us recall Harvest in our own school lives as a time of singing songs and bringing in food to share with those less fortunate. Harvest remains a lovely opportunity for children to reflect upon gratitude, the natural world and the importance of recognising that not everybody has access to the same things. It also connects beautifully with the wider work we have been doing this half-term around kindness, community and helping others.

Last week, I wrote about our visit from Ian Percival of Chester Aid for the Homeless and the charity's appeal for warm socks, hats, gloves and adult coats. Thank you to families who have already supported this. We will be bringing our donations together after half-term before passing them on to the charity.

Our children have not only been taking on responsibility as elected class members for our Pupil Parliament, they have also been supporting charitable causes through the work of our Fundraising Ambassadors, who have been visiting classrooms this week with their pumpkin competition. It is lovely to see children taking an active role in organising fundraising rather than simply being asked to contribute to it. They are learning about planning, communication, responsibility and the difference that collective effort can make. As we head towards winter, there is something particularly meaningful about helping children understand that kindness isn't just something we talk about in assemblies. It is something we demonstrate through our actions.

Planting for the Future

Our Year 3 children have been working with the Ellesmere Port Rotary Club this week, taking part in crocus planting! I love activities like this because they connect children with their environment and with people in the wider community who give their time to make a positive difference. There is also something rather lovely about planting bulbs in autumn, knowing that their flowers will appear in the spring – embracing patience and delayed gratification, in a world of instant results, is fast dying out as a life skill, but education is full of just such experiences. Bulb planting is a simple but important reminder that some of the things we do today will make a difference long after the moment itself has passed. Thank you to the Rotary Club for supporting our children with this experience.

Inclusion – Continuing to Develop Our Provision

There has been another substantial amount of work taking place across our inclusion provision this week. Our SEND leadership team has been involved in the SEND Summit, professional briefings on the Continuum of Need and providing the right support at the right time, alongside the many specialist appointments and reviews that support individual children. We have also welcomed Speech and Language Therapy colleagues, continued our work with the Mental Health Support Team and arranged further specialist professional development, including epilepsy training and a Steps to Eating workshop. This reflects the increasingly broad range of expertise required to meet the needs of children across Woodlands.

As I have mentioned in recent blogs, we are continuing to develop a more flexible approach to how our specialist and mainstream environments are used. We want children to access the provision that best meets their needs at a particular point in their development, rather than being restricted by the room or class to which they are ordinarily attached. For some children, this means accessing specialist support for part of their day while remaining within their mainstream class for other experiences. For others, it means gradually increasing opportunities to learn and participate alongside their mainstream peers. For some of our younger children, accessing a developmentally appropriate environment can be an important step towards greater confidence, independence and readiness to learn.

Our new Burrow #2 is part of this developing approach, and work on creating this additional space is planned for half-term, in fact, it starts tomorrow. Our ambition remains that all our spaces, expertise and resources are used purposefully to support all Woodlands children. Inclusion is not about where a child sits. It is about whether the child is learning, participating, developing and belonging.

The Adults Have Been Learning Too

There has been no shortage of professional development this week. Colleagues have attended training on early language development, the Early Years Foundation Stage, attachment and the role of the key person, alongside specialist SEND training and ongoing work to develop our teaching and curriculum. Our staff also continue to participate in professional networks and development opportunities which help us evaluate and strengthen what we do. Why? Because children's needs do not stand still, and neither should our professional understanding of how best to support them! I am grateful to colleagues who continue to engage positively with professional development, often alongside the considerable demands of their everyday roles.

Learning Beyond the Classroom

Our children have continued to enjoy a range of opportunities beyond their usual lessons. Year 3 have been developing their skills through judo, our KS2 Breakfast Club has enjoyed archery, and our Year 5 and 6 girls have been representing Woodlands in tag rugby. Our dance clubs with Vara have continued too, providing further opportunities for children to develop confidence, coordination and enjoyment of physical activity. These experiences contribute to something I talk about frequently: the importance of a broad education.

Not every child will discover their particular strengths through academic subjects alone. For some, it will be sport, music, creativity, leadership or an experience they had never previously considered trying. Our responsibility is to provide children with opportunities to discover those strengths.

GB British Values at Woodlands – Mutual Respect

Over the past few weeks, we have been exploring the Fundamental British Values that schools are expected to promote. We began with Democracy, followed by the Rule of Law and Individual Liberty. This week, our focus is Mutual Respect.

Respect Is a Two-Way Street

Mutual respect is something we talk about constantly at Woodlands, and it sits at the heart of our three core behaviour expectations: Ready, Respectful and Safe. But what does it actually mean? For children, mutual respect begins with understanding that every person matters and deserves to be treated with dignity, consideration and kindness. It means listening when somebody else is speaking, recognising that other people have feelings and opinions, understanding that our actions affect those around us and accepting that we will not always agree. Importantly, respect does not mean agreement.

Children should be able to question ideas, express opinions and disagree with others. In fact, learning how to do so thoughtfully is an essential part of education. What matters is how we disagree. We can challenge an idea without being unkind to the person expressing it. We can feel frustrated without being rude. We can make a mistake, acknowledge it and put things right and mutual respect is exactly that - mutual.

Children are expected to treat adults and one another respectfully, but adults have an equally important responsibility to model the behaviour we expect. This extends beyond classrooms and school gates. It applies to how we communicate with one another, how we behave online, how we respond when something doesn't go our way and how we treat people whose experiences or perspectives differ from our own.

Our Pupil Parliament elections this week have provided a wonderful practical example. Children have had the opportunity to express their views, listen to those of others and take part in a process where not everybody can be elected. Learning to congratulate somebody else, accept an outcome graciously and continue contributing positively is mutual respect in action. Ultimately, we want children to understand that being respectful is not simply about being polite when things are going well. It is about how we behave when we are disappointed, frustrated or faced with somebody who thinks differently from us. That is a lesson which remains important throughout life.

After half-term, we will explore our final British Value: Tolerance of Those with Different Faiths and Beliefs.

Equality – Our Next Whole-School Conversation

Another important piece of work will begin after half-term. I have been reviewing our Equality Objectives and Action Plan, as I do every autumn term, and naturally I want our children to be part of that conversation in a way that is appropriate to their age and understanding.

With support from our colleagues at Picture News, we will help children explore what equality means, why fairness matters and how we can ensure that everybody feels valued, included and able to participate fully in school life. This is an important distinction for children to understand: equality does not always mean treating everybody identically. Different children may need different forms of support to have a fair opportunity to participate and succeed.

For our youngest children, these ideas might begin with stories, friendships and recognising that people have different needs. For older children, we can begin to explore rights, discrimination, barriers to participation and how communities can become fairer and more inclusive. I am particularly keen that this work connects directly with our Pupil Parliament, giving children opportunities to contribute their views and help us reflect upon how well we put our values into practice. Our commitment to equality should not simply exist in a policy on the school website. It should be visible in children's experiences, our relationships and the decisions we make. I look forward to sharing more about this work next half-term.

Half-Term - A Well-Deserved Break

And so, after a remarkably busy first half-term, spent without our much loved and respected Mrs Liversey, who is still recovering from skin cancer, we have reached the holiday. There will still be plenty happening behind the scenes here in school, including essential maintenance, building and cleaning work.

When children return, we will be launching the next phase of our Pupil Parliament, continuing our work on equality and inclusion, developing our curriculum and enrichment opportunities, and preparing for another very busy half-term, no doubt a whole school Ofsted, not to mention the build up to Christmas, and all the joy this brings, from nativity plays to Christmas trees, carol concerts at the local church and Christmas jumper days!

But for now, I hope our children and all of our families have an opportunity to enjoy some quality time together over half term.

Finally, I want to say a public thank you to our staff for the enormous amount of work that has gone into this half-term, particularly while we continue to manage some challenging staffing circumstances. Not to mention that, since June, state-maintained primary headteachers have been handed a relentless, unprecedented wave of new statutory duties that we have had to rapidly turn into live school policy. In a remarkably compressed timeframe, we have had to completely overhaul our safeguarding frameworks to comply with the heavily revised Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) guidance, completely audit and rewrite our Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum to meet new rules, and implement complex new local authority admissions and data-sharing regulations driven by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act. Alongside these structural overhauls, we have concurrently managed the immediate logistical rollouts of expanded Free School Meal eligibilities, new allergy safety mandates, and legal caps on branded school uniforms. Translating this sheer volume of primary legislation, statutory handbooks, and government circulars into functional, safe, and compliant daily school operations has demanded an extraordinary amount of behind-the-scenes leadership - all achieved under intense time pressure to ensure our school was ready for your children this term. We have done it!

I hope they, and you, have a wonderful half-term break – we will see you all back in Eddisbury Road, bright and well-rested on Monday 2nd November.